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SYMANTEC/ FENWICK  
SILICON VALLEY CENTER  
801 CALIFORNIA STREET  
MOUNTAIN VIEW, CA 94041

EXAMINER
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JEAN GILLES, JUDE

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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2143

DATE MAILED: 09/22/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

<b>Office Action Summary</b>	Application No. 10/084,038	Applicant(s) SCHIAVONE ET AL.	
	Examiner Jude J. Jean-Gilles	Art Unit 2143	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

### Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

### Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 15 June 2006.
- 2a) ☐ This action is FINAL. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*; 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

### Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1,3,4,6,10-53,55-76 and 78-87 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1,3,4,6,10-53,55-76 and 78-87 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

### Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 26 February 2002 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.  
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).  
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

### Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some \* c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
  - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.
  - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

\* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

### Attachment(s)

- |                                                                                        |                                                                   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)            | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)           |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)   | - Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____                                    |
| 3) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application |
| Paper No(s)/Mail Date <u>06/30/2006</u> .                                              | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                          |

### **DETAILED ACTION**

This Action is in regards to the Reply received on 06/15/2006.

#### ***Response to Amendment***

1. This action is responsive to the application filed on 06/15/2006. Claims 1-6 and 8-87 are pending, and have been rejected. Claims 1, 6, 10, 11, 16, 52, 62, 64, 66, 68-74, 82 and 85 are amended. Claims 2, 5, 8, 9, 54 and 77 are cancelled. No new claims are newly added. Claims 1, 3-4, 6, 10-53, 55-76 and 78-87 as amended, are pending and represent a method and system for "controlling distribution of network communications".

#### **Response to Arguments**

2. Applicant's arguments with respect to claims 1, 3-4, 6, 10-53, 55-76 and 78-87 have been carefully considered, but are not deemed fully persuasive. Applicant's arguments are deemed moot in view of the following new ground of rejection as explained here below

The dependent claims stand rejected as articulated in the First Office Action and all objections not addressed in Applicant's response are herein reiterated.

In response to Applicant's arguments, 37 CFR § 1.11(c) requires applicant to "clearly point out the patentable novelty which he or she thinks the claims present in view of the state of the art disclosed by the references cited or the objections made. He or she must show the amendments avoid such references or objections."

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103***

3. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

4. **Claims 1, 3, 4, 6, 10-16, 18, 21-38, and 44-53, 55-76, 78-87** are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Geiger et al (Geiger), Patent No. 6,073,142 in view of Walker et al (Walker), U.S. Patent No: 6,278,709 B1.

Regarding **claim 1**, Geiger discloses a method for controlling distribution of electronic messages communicated from a sender to a receiver via a communications network, the method comprising the steps of:

(a) receiving a message intended for delivery to a recipient (col. 5, lines 58-67; col. 6, lines 15-50);

(b) identifying a priority level corresponding to the message (column 10, lines 44-62) ;

(c) identifying a processing rule for the identified priority level (column 10, lines 44-62; column 20, lines 4-20); and

(d) delivering the message to the intended recipient in accordance with the processing rule (column 10, lines 44-62; column 20, lines 4-20; column 20, lines 21-58).

However, Geiger does not specifically disclose identifying a priority level corresponding to the message by reading the priority level from a header of the message.

In the same field of endeavor, Walker discloses “... *a method of routing message packets in a routing switch comprising receiving a plurality of message packets at respective ones of a plurality of inputs of a routing switch, each message packet including a header indicative of, the at least one of a plurality of outputs of the routing switch it is to be routed to, allocating, to each one of a plurality of values of the header, a priority level, determining the priority level of the header of each message packet received at the plurality of inputs and routing the message packet including the header having the highest priority of all message packets received...*” [see Walker; column 5, lines 45-56].

Accordingly, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the networking art at the time the invention was made to have incorporated Walker's teachings of reading the priority level from a header of the message, with the teachings of Geiger, for the purpose of “...overcoming the deficiencies of conventional systems and provides the beneficial ability to define business rules that implement business communication policies for controlling the handling of e-mail messages and other data objects by a data server...” as stated by Geiger in lines 2-10 of column 3. Walker also provides motivation to combine by stating in lines 41-44 that “...the invention provides a technique for prioritizing incoming message packets to determine which message packet to route first...”. By this rationale **claim 1** is rejected.

Regarding **claim 3**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the method of claim 1, wherein step (c) is performed by referencing a rule base (see Geiger; column 10, lines 44-62; column 20, lines 4-20).

Regarding **claim 4**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the method of claim 1, wherein steps (a) through (d) are performed at a client device, the method further comprising the step of:

(e) transmitting to a network device a preference for receiving messages having the priority level (see Geiger; column 10, lines 32-62).

Regarding **claim 6**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses a method for controlling distribution of electronic messages communicated from a sender to a receiver via a communications network, the method comprising the steps of:

(a) receiving a message intended for delivery to a recipient (see Geiger; col. 5, lines 58-67; col. 6, lines 15-50);

(b) identifying a priority level corresponding to the message (see Geiger; column 10, lines 44-62) by reading the priority level from a header of the message [see Walker; column 5, lines 45-56];

(c) identifying a prescribed delay for the identified priority level [see Crowther; column 9, lines 15-27; column 8, lines 1-50]; and

(d) delivering the message to the intended recipient after the prescribed delay (see Geiger; column 11, lines 12-45).

Regarding **claim 10**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the the method of claim 2, wherein the sender specifies the priority level by selecting the priority level to be assigned to the message from a menu of priority levels displayed to the sender via a graphical user interface (see Geiger; fig. 21, item 2100); [see Crowther; column 9, lines 15-27; column 8, lines 1-50].

Regarding **claim 11**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the method of claim 2, wherein the priority level is a predetermined priority level to be assigned to a plurality of messages originating from the sender (see Geiger; column 23, lines 37-67); [see Crowther; column 9, lines 15-27; column 8, lines 1-50].

Regarding **claim 12**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the method for controlling distribution of network communications via a communications network, the method comprising:

identifying a plurality of network communications, each being intended for delivery to a respective recipient, each having a respective priority level (fig. 13; (see Geiger; column 10, lines 44-62);

causing delivery of the plurality of network communications to the respective recipients in an order corresponding to the respective priority levels, wherein certain of the plurality of network communications having a relatively high priority level are delivered before certain of the plurality of network communications having a relatively low priority level (see Geiger; column 19, lines 53-67; column 20, lines 1-58); [see Walker; column 5, lines 45-56].

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Regarding **claim 13**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses a method for controlling distribution of network communications via a communications network, the method comprising;

identifying a plurality of network communications, each being intended for delivery to a respective recipient, each having a respective priority level (fig. 13; (see Geiger; column 10, lines 44-62);

delaying allocation of a network connection for a network communication having a relatively low priority level until after allocation of the network connection for another network communication having a priority level higher than the relatively low priority level (see Geiger; column 11, lines 7-62); [see Walker; column 5, lines 45-56].

Regarding **claim 14**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses a method for controlling distribution of network communications via a communications network, the method comprising;

identifying a plurality of network communications, each having a respective priority level, and a respective network path (fig. 13; (see Geiger; column 10, lines 44-62);

selectively delaying allocation of a network connection for delivering a network communications having a certain path until after utilization of network resources no longer exceeds a predetermined threshold (see Geiger; column 11, lines 12-45; column 25, lines 39-67); [see Crowther; column 9, lines 15-27; column 8, lines 1-50].

Regarding **claim 15**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the method for controlling distribution of network communications via a communications network, the method comprising;



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identifying a plurality of network communications, each having a respective priority level, and a respective source address (fig. 13; (see Geiger; column 10, lines 44-62); referencing a list of preferred customers' e-mail domains (see Geiger; column 18, lines 60-67; column 19, lines 1-23); and delaying a network communication having a source address that does not correspond to any e-mail domain on the list until after transmission of another network communication having a respective source address that does correspond to an e-mail domain on the list (see Geiger; column 18, lines 60-67; column 19, lines 1-51); [see Walker; column 5, lines 45-56].

Regarding **claim 16**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the method for controlling distribution of network communications via a communications network, the method comprising:

sampling network communications received from a certain sender to determine a level of network communications having a certain characteristic (see Geiger; column 19, lines 52-67; column 20, lines 1-20; column 23, lines 5-36); determining a priority level as a function of the level; and assigning the priority level to other network communications received from the certain sender (see Geiger; column 19, lines 52-67; column 20, lines 1-20; column 23, lines 5-36); [see Walker; column 5, lines 45-56].

Regarding **claim 18**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the method of claim 16, wherein the characteristic comprises undeliverability of network communication to a respective receiver (see Geiger; column 5, lines 42-67; column 6, lines 1-57).

Regarding **claim 21**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses an apparatus for controlling distribution of network communications via a communications network, the apparatus comprising;  
means for identifying a respective priority for each of a plurality of network communications (see Geiger; column 19, lines 52-67; column 20, lines 1-20);  
means for allocating network connections for delivery of network communications, said means being configured to provide a prioritization effect whereby connections are allocated for delivery of said plurality of network communications in an order corresponding to respective priorities of said plurality of network communications, a network communication having a relatively high priority being allocated a network connection before another network communication having a relatively low priority (see Geiger; column 19, lines 52-67; column 20, lines 1-58); [see Walker; column 5, lines 45-56].

Regarding **claim 22**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the apparatus of claim 21, whereby said means for allocating network connections provides unnecessary delay for allocation of a network connection for a network communication having a relatively low priority to permit allocation of said network connection for delivery of a network communication having a relatively high priority (see Geiger; column 19, lines 52-67; column 20, lines 1-58)..

Regarding **claim 23**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the apparatus of claim 21, wherein said delay is provided for any network communications having a certain priority (see Geiger; column 19, lines 52-67; column 20, lines 1-58)..

Regarding **claim 24**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the apparatus of claim 21, wherein said delay is provided for any network communication received along a certain network path (fig. 13; (see Geiger; column 10, lines 44-62);

Regarding **claim 25**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the apparatus of claim 21, wherein said delay is provided for any network communication originating from a certain sender (see Geiger; column 18, lines 60-67; column 19, lines 1-51).

Regarding **claim 26**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the apparatus of claim 21, wherein said delay is provided for any network communication when utilization of network resources exceeds a predetermined threshold (see Geiger; column 18, lines 60-67; column 19, lines 1-51).

Regarding **claim 27**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses a system for controlling distribution of network communications via a communications network, the system comprising;

a mail server capable of processing network communications (see Geiger; column 5, lines 42-67; column 7, lines 4-30; fig. 1, items 102, and 106);

a device capable of determining a respective priority for each of a plurality of network communications (fig. 2, item 230; column 10, lines 32-63); and a device capable of allocating network connections for delivery of network communications, said device being specially configured to allocate network connections to provide a prioritization effect whereby a network communication having a relatively high priority is allocated a certain network connection before another network communication having a

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relatively low priority (see Geiger; column 19, lines 53-67; column 20, lines 1-58); [see Crowther; column 9, lines 15-27; column 8, lines 1-50].

Regarding **claim 28**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the system of claim 27, wherein said mail server is specially configured with software to act as said device capable of determining the respective priority for each of the plurality of network communications (see Geiger; column 5, lines 42-67; column 7, lines 4-30; fig. 1, items 102, and 106).

Regarding **claim 29**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the system of claim 27, wherein device capable of allocating network connections comprises a hardware appliance distinct from said mail server (fig. 2, item 230; column 10, lines 32-63).

Regarding **claim 30**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses a network appliance for controlling distribution of network communications via a communications network, the network appliance comprising;

a heuristic engine for identifying a network path for each of a plurality of network communications received by the network appliance, and for sampling a subset of the plurality of network communications, each network communication of the subset having a common network path (fig. 2, items 220, and 230);

a scanner for scanning each network communication of the subset and for determining a value for a sender metric for the network communications of the subset (fig. 3, item 287; column 8, lines 14-67);

a rules database storing rules for delivering network communications, at least

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one of the rules correlating the value to a priority level; and  
a connection processor for allocating network connections for delivery of network communications, the connection processor being configured to allocate network connections for certain network communications in an order of priority corresponding to the certain network communications' respective priority levels, wherein each network communication's respective priority level is assigned according to its respective network path, and the priority level assigned to the subset of network communications having an identical network path (see Geiger; column 8, lines 14-67; fig. 1, item 102, and 106; column 9, lines 4-67; column 10, lines 1-63); [see Walker; column 5, lines 45-56].

Regarding **claim 31**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the network appliance of claim 30, further comprising a notification module, the notification module being capable of communicating to another network appliance (fig. 4A, item 410; column 5, lines 42-67; column 6, lines 1-57).

Regarding **claim 32**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the network appliance of claim 30, wherein the notification module is configured to communicate via the communications network (fig. 4A, item 410; column 5, lines 42-67; column 6, lines 1-57).

Regarding **claim 33**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the network appliance of claim 31, wherein the notification module is configured to communicate priority level information for a corresponding network path (fig. 13; (see Geiger; column 10, lines 44-62).

Regarding **claim 34**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the network appliance of claim 31 , wherein the notification module is configured to communicate a preference to delay network communications.

Regarding **claim 35**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the network appliance of claim 31 , wherein the notification module is configured to communicate a request to reduce a volume of network communications directed to the network appliance (see Geiger; column 7, lines 4-67; column 8, lines 1-59).

Regarding **claim 36**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the network appliance of claim 30, wherein the sampling is performed according to a predetermined sampling rate (see Geiger; column 4, lines 21-39; column 23, lines 5-36).

Regarding **claim 37**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the network appliance of claim 36, wherein the predetermined sampling rate is stored in the rules database (see Geiger; column 3, lines 5-36).

Regarding **claim 38**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the network appliance of claim 30, wherein the sampling rate is varied over time (fig. 3, item 287; column 8, lines 14-67).

Regarding **claim 44**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the network appliance of claim 30, wherein the rules database further comprises a prescribed delay corresponding to the priority level (see Geiger; column 11, lines 7-62).

Regarding **claim 45**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the network appliance of claim 44, wherein the prescribed delay comprises a fixed period of time (see Geiger; column 11, lines 7-62).

Regarding **claim 46**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the network appliance of claim 44, wherein the prescribed delay comprises delay until network resource availability reaches a certain level (see Geiger; column 11, lines 7-62).

Regarding **claim 47**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses a method for controlling distribution of network communications via a communications network, the method comprising:

tracking a number of inbound connections for each of a plurality of communications hosts (see Geiger; column 11, lines 3-61), and

altering a connection build process for a certain of said plurality of communications hosts to control a flow of said certain host's network communications [see Walker; column 5, lines 45-56];

Regarding **claim 48**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the method of claim 47, wherein the connection build process relates to a TCP connection (see Geiger; column 17, lines 3-61).

Regarding **claim 49**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the method of claim 47, wherein the connection build process relates to an SMTP connection (see Geiger; column 6, lines 15-57).

Regarding **claim 50**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the method of claim 47, wherein altering the connection build process comprises slowing the connection build process for said certain host (see Geiger; column 6, lines 15-57; column 17, lines 3-61).

Regarding **claim 51**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the method of claim 47, wherein altering the connection build process comprises stopping the connection build process for said certain host (see Geiger; column 17, lines 3-61).

Regarding **claim 52**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses a system for controlling distribution of network communications via a communications network, the system comprising

a mail server operating within an internal communications network for distribution of incoming network communications received via an external communications network (see Geiger; column 5, lines 42-67; column 7, lines 4-30; fig. 1, items 102, and 106); and

a network appliance logically positioned between the mail server and the external communications network, the network appliance being specially configured to selectively allocate network connection of the internal communications network for delivery of the incoming network communications to the mail server, the network appliance being further configured to allocate network connections to the incoming network communications according to priority levels of the incoming network communications (fig. 2, item 230; column 10, lines 32-63); [see Walker; column 5, lines 45-56].

Regarding **claim 53**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the method of claim 52, wherein the prioritized manner provides for allocation of resources to an incoming network communication that provides for delivery of higher priority network



communications before lower priority network communications (see Geiger; column 19, lines 53-67; column 20, lines 1-58).

Regarding **claim 55**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses a network appliance for controlling distribution of network communications via a communications network, the network appliance receiving incoming network communication connections, the network appliance being capable of allocating network connections for delivering network communications, the network appliance selectively allocating network connections for each of a plurality of network communications in an order to achieve a prioritization effect according to priority levels of the incoming network communications (fig. 2, item 230; column 10, lines 32-63; column 10, lines 44-62); [see Walker; column 5, lines 45-56].

Regarding **claim 56**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the network appliance of claim 55, the prioritization effect comprising delaying allocation of a network connection for delivery of a first network communication having a first priority, and allocation of the network connection for delivery of a second network communication having a second priority higher than the first priority, allocation of the network connection for delivery of the second network communication being performed before allocation of the network communication for delivery of the first network communication (see Geiger; column 19, lines 53-67; column 20, lines 1-58).

Regarding **claim 57**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the network appliance of claim 55, the prioritization effect comprising allocating a network connection for delivery of a relatively high priority network communication before

allocating the network connection for delivery of a relatively low priority network communication (see Geiger; column 19, lines 53-67; column 20, lines 1-58).

Regarding **claim 58**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the network appliance of claim 55, the prioritization effect comprising delaying allocation of a network connection for a given path to meet predetermined preference criteria (see Geiger; column 11, lines 12-45; column 25, lines 39-67).

Regarding **claim 59**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the network appliance of claim 55, wherein the predetermined preference criteria provides that network communications from a certain path should not be delivered if utilization of network resources presently exceeds a predetermined threshold (see Geiger; column 11, lines 12-45; column 25, lines 39-67).

Regarding **claim 60**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the network appliance of claim 55, wherein the predetermined preference criteria provides that network communications from a certain sender should not be delivered if utilization of network resources presently exceeds a predetermined threshold (see Geiger; column 11, lines 12-45; column 25, lines 39-67).

Regarding **claim 61**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the network appliance of claim 55, wherein the predetermined preference criteria provides that network communications having a certain priority level should not be delivered if utilization of network resources presently exceeds a predetermined threshold (see Geiger; column 11, lines 12-45; column 25, lines 39-67).

Regarding **claim 62**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses a method for controlling distribution of network communications from a sender to a receiver via a communications network, the method comprising the steps of:  
identifying a particular network communication intended for delivery to a recipient (col. 5, lines 58-67; col. 6, lines 15-50);

identifying a priority level corresponding to the particular network communication (see Geiger; column 10, lines 44-62); [see Walker; column 5, lines 45-56];  
determining a prescribed delay for the identified priority level (see Geiger; column 11, lines 12-45); and

delaying delivery of the particular network communication to the intended recipient according to the prescribed delay wherein delaying delivery of the particular network communication comprises controlling allocation of network connections for delivery of some network communications to cause other network communications having priority levels higher than the particular network communication to be delivered before delivery of the particular network communication (see Geiger; column 11, lines 12-67); [see Walker; column 5, lines 45-56].

Regarding **claim 63**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the method of claim 62, wherein the identifying, determining and delaying are performed by a network appliance capable of communicating via the communications network, the network appliance being logically positioned between the sender and the receiver (see Geiger; column 11, lines 7-62).

Regarding **claim 64**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the method of claim 62, wherein identifying the priority level comprises identifying a network address of a mail system of the sender from which the particular network communication originated (see Geiger; column 23, lines 5-67).

Regarding **claim 65**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the method of claim 62, wherein identifying the priority level comprises identifying a network address of a mail system of an intermediary along a network path from the sender to the receiver (see Geiger; column 23, lines 5-67).

Regarding **claim 66**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the method of claim 62, wherein identifying the priority level comprises identifying a domain name of the a mail system of the sender from which the particular network communication originated (see Geiger; column 23, lines 5-67).

Regarding **claim 67**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the method of claim 62, wherein identifying the priority level comprises identifying a domain name of a mail system of an intermediary along a network path from the sender to the receiver (see Geiger; column 23, lines 5-67).

Regarding **claim 68**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the method of claim 62, wherein identifying the priority level comprises identifying network path information found in a header of the particular network communication (see Geiger; column 17, lines 16-43).

Regarding **claim 69**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the method of claim 68, wherein identifying the network path information comprises referencing TCP or IP packet headers of the network communication (see Geiger; column 17, lines 3-61).

Regarding **claim 70**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the method of claim 62, wherein identifying the priority level comprises identifying network path information of a mail system having previously processed the particular network communication (fig. 13; (see Geiger; column 10, lines 44-62).

Regarding **claim 71**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the method of claim 62, wherein identifying the priority level comprises identifying network path information of a mail system having previously routed the particular network communication (see Geiger; fig. 13; column 10, lines 44-62).

Regarding **claim 72**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the method of claim 62, wherein identifying the priority level comprises identifying a sender identity domain associated with the sender of the particular network communication (see Geiger; col. 5, lines 58-67; col. 6, lines 15-50).

Regarding **claim 73**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the method of claim 62, wherein identifying the sender identity domain comprises referencing SMTP header information of the network communication (see Geiger; column 6, lines 15-57).

Regarding **claim 74**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the method of claim 62, wherein identifying the priority level comprises identifying a geographic origin of the particular network communication (see Geiger; column 23, lines 5-67).

Regarding **claim 75**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the method of claim 62, wherein the prescribed delay is established according to a recorded preference of the receiver (see Geiger; column 11, lines 12-45; column 25, lines 39-67).

Regarding **claim 76**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the method of claim 62, wherein the prescribed delay is established according to a preference of an intermediary, the intermediary being logically positioned between the sender and the receiver for transmitting network communications from the sender to the receiver (see Geiger; column 11, lines 12-45; column 25, lines 39-67).

Regarding **claim 78**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses a method for controlling distribution of network communications via a communications network, the method comprising:

identifying a plurality of network communications, each having a respective priority level (see Geiger; column 10, lines 44-62); [see Walker; column 5, lines 45-56];  
allocating network connections for delivery of network communications to  
allocate network connections as a function of a respective priority level of each of the plurality of network communications(see Geiger; column 10, lines 44-62).

Regarding **claim 79**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the method of claim 78, wherein said allocating comprises allocating a network connection to a certain network communication having a first priority level before allocating the network connection to another network communication having a second priority level lower than the first priority level (see Geiger; column 10, lines 44-62).

Regarding **claim 80**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the method of claim 78, wherein said allocating comprises delaying transmission of a certain network communication having a first priority level until after transmission of another network communication having a second priority level higher than the first priority level (see Geiger; column 10, lines 44-62).

Regarding **claim 81**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the method of claim 78, wherein said allocating comprises causing delivery of a certain network communication having a first priority level to occur after delivery of another network communication having a second priority level higher than the first priority level (see Geiger; column 10, lines 44-62).

Regarding **claim 82**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses a system for controlling distribution of network communications via a communications network, the system comprising  
a mail server operating within an internal communications network for distribution of incoming network communications received via an external communications network (see Geiger; column 5, lines 42-67; column 7, lines 4-30; fig. 1, items 102, and 106); and  
a network appliance logically positioned between the mail server and the external communications network, the network appliance being specially configured to selectively allocate network connections of the internal communications network for delivery  
of the incoming network communications to the mail server, the network appliance

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being further configured to allocate network connections to the incoming network communications to ensure that network communications received along a certain network path are delivered at a rate that consumes no more than a certain percentage of the network connections of the internal communications network according to priority levels of the incoming network communications (see Geiger; column 11, lines 12-45; column 25, lines 39-67); [see Crowther; column 9, lines 15-27; column 8, lines 1-50].

Regarding **claim 83**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the system of claim 82, wherein the certain percentage is established by a predetermined preference setting (see Geiger; column 11, lines 12-45; column 25, lines 39-67).

Regarding **claim 84**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the system of claim 83, wherein the preference setting is established by the receiver (see Geiger; column 11, lines 12-45; column 25, lines 39-67).

Regarding **claim 85**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses a network appliance for controlling distribution of network communications via an external communications network for delivery within an internal communications network, the network appliance being specially configured to selectively allocate network connections of the internal communications network that may be used for delivery of network communications, the resources being selectively allocated to ensure that network communications received along a certain network path are delivered at a rate that consumes no more than a certain percentage of the network connections of the internal communications network according to priority levels of the incoming network



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communications (see Geiger; column 11, lines 12-45; column 25, lines 39-67; fig. 3, items 291, and 292); [see Walker; column 5, lines 45-56].

Regarding **claim 86**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the system of claim 85, wherein the certain percentage is established by a predetermined preference setting (see Geiger; column 11, lines 12-45; column 25, lines 39-67).

Regarding **claim 87**, The combination Geiger-Walker discloses the system of claim 86, wherein the preference setting is established by the server (see Geiger; column 11, lines 12-45; column 25, lines 39-67).

5. **Claims 17, 19, 20, and 39-43** are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Geiger and Walker, in view of Aronson et al (Aronson), U.S. Patent No: 6,654,787 B1.

Regarding **claim 17**, the combination of Geiger-Walker teaches the invention substantially as claimed. Geiger fully discloses the method of controlling distribution of claim 16. However, Geiger does not specifically disclose the method of claim 16, wherein the characteristic comprises containing of a virus.

In the same field of endeavor, Aronson discloses "...a filter module in a communication controller that performs a virus check on incoming email messages..." [see Aronson; column 5, lines 50-67].

Accordingly, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the networking art at the time the invention was made to have incorporated Aronson's teachings filtering emails for virus, with the teachings of Geiger, for the

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purpose of "*sorting messages....based on rules ...and forwarding messages sorted into one of the groups to the client ...*" as stated by Geiger in lines 29-33 of column 2. By this rationale **claim 17** is rejected.

**Regarding claim 19**, the combination of Geiger-Walker-Aronson discloses the method of claim 16, wherein the characteristic comprises characterization of network communication as spam [see Geiger, column 5, lines 20-67]. The same motivation that was used for claim 17 is also valid for claim 19 [see Geiger, column 2, lines 29-33]. By this rationale, **claim 19** is rejected.

**Regarding claim 20**, the combination of Geiger-Walker-Aronson discloses the method of claim 19, wherein characterization of the network communication as spam is determined according to a pattern matching technique [see Geiger, column 2, lines 29-33]. The same motivation that was used for claim 17 is also valid for claim 20 [see Geiger, column 2, lines 29-33]. By this rationale, **claim 20** is rejected.

**Regarding claim 39**, the combination of Geiger-Walker-Aronson discloses the network appliance of claim 30, wherein the sender metric comprises a virus rate indicating a percentage of the network communications of the subset that carry a virus [see Geiger, column 2, lines 29-33]. The same motivation that was used for claim 17 is also valid for claim 39 [see Geiger, column 2, lines 29-33]. By this rationale, **claim 39** is rejected.

**Regarding claim 40**, the combination of Geiger-Walker-Aronson discloses the network appliance of claim 30, wherein the sender metric comprises a delivery success rate indicating the percentage of the network communications of the subset that are

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delivered [see Geiger, column 2, lines 29-33]. The same motivation that was used for claim 17 is also valid for claim 40 [see Geiger, column 2, lines 29-33]. By this rationale, **claim 40** is rejected.

**Regarding claim 41**, the combination of Geiger-Walker-Aronson discloses the network appliance of claim 30, wherein the sender metric comprises a spam rate indicating a percentage of the network communications of the subset that are determined to be unwanted [see Geiger, column 2, lines 29-33]. The same motivation that was used for claim 17 is also valid for claim 41 [see Geiger, column 2, lines 29-33]. By this rationale, **claim 41** is rejected.

**Regarding claim 42**, the combination of Geiger-Walker-Aronson discloses the network appliance of claim 41, wherein the determination of whether a certain network communication is unwanted is determined by content-based analysis [see Geiger, column 2, lines 29-33]. The same motivation that was used for claim 17 is also valid for claim 42 [see Geiger, column 2, lines 29-33]. By this rationale, **claim 42** is rejected.

**Regarding claim 43**, the combination of Geiger-Walker-Aronson discloses the network appliance of claim 41, wherein the determination of whether a certain network communication is unwanted is determined by pattern matching [see Geiger, column 2, lines 29-33]. The same motivation that was used for claim 17 is also valid for claim 43 [see Geiger, column 2, lines 29-33]. By this rationale, **claim 43** is rejected.

***Response to Arguments***

6. Applicant's Request for Reconsideration filed on 06/15/2006, has been carefully considered but is not deemed fully persuasive. However, because there exists the likelihood of future presentation of this argument, the Examiner thinks that it is prudent to address Applicants' main points of contention.

A. Independent claim 1 is not obvious in view of Geicer and Crowther because neither Geicer nor Crowther discloses or suggests "identifying a priority level corresponding to the message by reading the priority level from a header of the message, (and) identifying a processing rule for the identified priority level."

B. Furthermore, according to Crowther, the particular position within the queue to which a message is assigned may depend upon whether the message is received from a registered, or unregistered, user of the system. (See Crowther, Col. 9, Lines 15-28). However, Crowther does not disclose or suggest "identifying a processing rule for the identified priority level," as is recited in claim 1.

As to "Point A" it is the position of the Examiner that Geiger teaches the limitations of the above mentioned claims. However, in view of Applicant's remarks, and characterization of the claims, new prior art reference of Walker which discloses a *method of routing message packets in a routing switch comprising receiving a plurality of message packets at respective ones of a plurality of inputs of a routing switch, each message packet including a header indicative of, the at least one of a plurality of*

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*outputs of the routing switch it is to be routed to, allocating, to each one of a plurality of values of the header, a priority level, determining the priority level of the header of each message packet received at the plurality of inputs and routing the message packet including the header having the highest priority of all message packets received..."*

[see Walker; column 5, lines 45-67]. The combination of Geiger and Walker contains all limitations and sub-limitations of independent claims and claims 1, 3-4, 6, 10-53, 55-76 and 78-87 have been rejected.

As to "Point B", see answer for point A above.

Examiner notes with delight that no new matter has been added and that the new claims are supported by the application as filed. However, applicant has failed in presenting claims and drawings that delineate the contours of this invention as compared to the cited prior art. Applicant has failed to clearly point out patentable novelty in view of the state of the art disclosed by the references cited that would overcome the 103(a) rejections applied against the claims, the rejection is therefore sustained.

**Conclusion**

7. Applicant's remarks and new claims necessitated the new ground(s) of rejection presented in this Office action. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE NON-FINAL**. The Examiner strongly anticipates a Final Rejection Office Action on the next response if amendments are not properly made to the claims to perhaps place them in condition for allowance.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from examiner should be directed to Jude Jean-Gilles whose telephone number is (571) 272-3914. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Thursday and every other Friday from 8:00 AM to 5:30 PM.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, David Wiley, can be reached on (571) 272-3923. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

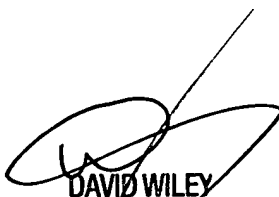
Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is (571) 272-9000.

Jude Jean-Gilles

Patent Examiner

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JJG 

  
DAVID WILEY  
SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER  
TECHNOLOGY CENTER 2100

September 09, 2006